

http://www.phillyburbs.com/news/news_details/article/26/2010/august/03/grant-allows-for-equipment-update.html

By: KRISTEN COPPOCK - Burlington County Times – August 2, 2010

MOUNT LAUREL - Mount Laurel Fire District No. 1 recently was awarded \$247,050 through the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program to purchase safety equipment, including breathing devices.

The air packs the department uses are almost 20 years old and no longer conform to regulations.

"They're at least three or four standards behind," Fire Chief Robert J. Gallos Jr. said. "This funding will give our firefighters the safety equipment they deserve."

The fire district applied for the grant last year. The funding allotment was announced Thursday by Congressman John Adler, D-3rd of Cherry Hill, who had written a letter of support that was included in the application.

"Our first responders risk their lives to keep our communities safe," Adler said in a written statement. "As municipalities deal with budget constraints, these funds will help protect our firefighters. Mount Laurel deserves its fair share of federal resources for public safety."

Paperwork must be filed before a check is handed over, but the fire district already has plans for the funds. It will buy 42 self-contained breathing apparatuses, air packs that include face pieces and spare oxygen cylinders.

"They're what firefighters use to go into hazardous atmospheres," Gallos said.

The grant also will finance 42 personal accountability safety systems and two accountability systems that allow firefighters' locations to be determined.

"It's like GPS," Gallos said.

In addition, 47 spare face pieces and two rapid intervention packs, which are designed to help trapped firefighters breathe, will be purchased.

The new equipment will cost about \$306,000. Based on 2009 prices, each air pack costs about \$6,000, each safety system is \$600, the two accountability systems are \$2,000 apiece, each face piece is \$400, and the rapid intervention packs are \$3,000 apiece.

"I'm very thankful that we got this grant. This is definitely a big gift for us," Gallos said. "It's very helpful to the taxpayers and the department."

Township voters passed a referendum that allowed the fire district to purchase the equipment it needed. The money reserved for that purpose will be used only to cover the difference between the grant and the actual costs.

"That's \$247,050 that doesn't have to come from the taxpayers," the chief said.